

Bubble

By Raven Olson

Getting adopted could have led me anywhere. I could have been with a filthy rich, white family, living inside the protective gates of a Beverly Hills community. Maybe, I would have lived in the middle of fucking nowhere, in a town where the local supermarket is a twenty minute drive away. Perhaps, I could have lived in the city that never sleeps, with parents who never made it to my dance recitals. As I was sitting in the dull and frigid courthouse room, all I could think about were the what if's of my life.

What if I never got adopted? What if my parents never got a divorce? What if my father loved me enough to stick up for me?

What if, what if, what if.

I didn't live in Beverly Hills, New York City, or some no-name town in Arkansas. Instead, I lived in Celebration, Florida, better known as the town that Disney built. The homes were as perfect as the Barbie Dreamhouse *every* little girl *had* to get at an age way too early. The picket fences were as white as the cocaine that the housewives shoved up their noses each morning. The grass was kept as neat as one of the members of The Queen's Guard. Of course, this was due to the fear that the Homeowner's Association would send a firmly worded letter about how you are not keeping up with the town's image. Kids can play freely in the alleyways behind their three story homes, only to grow up and realize they have lost that freedom.

When the streetlights simultaneously turn on, residents know that it is time to close the doors, flick the porch light on, and turn away from their seemingly perfect town, to their shoddy personal lives. I grew up with two parents who loved me. There was never a soccer game, musical

theatre performance, or band concert that they missed. I knew they loved me and I knew they did not love each other.

To this day, I can still recall my spot at the top of the stairs; it hid me perfectly, but I could still hear the roar of my mother's screams and the apathy in my father's.

As you can imagine, the constant blaring of gossip was as if there was an actual train in town. If there was an unfaithful husband, your neighbors would know about it the second you find out--sometimes even before you know. God forbid a teenager would smoke pot, you'd know in a heartbeat if it was your kid who was now deemed the town 'druggie.' That's why, when my parents told me that they were getting a divorce, one of the first thoughts to run across my mind was: *what are the kids at school going to think?* I wasn't surprised by my parents divorce in the slightest. They had separated for a time when I was about six or seven years old; a child's ability to ignore reality and create their own is a bittersweet gift. The first time they were taking a break, I loved every second of it. My father moved out and into a motel across the street from town that sat right above a Waffle House. There was an abundance of pool time, peanut butter waffles, and attention from my favorite person in the world-- what else could a little girl want?

Even as my father sat across from me, telling me it would be okay, a part of me knew that it *wouldn't* be okay. This was the first of many lies he would tell me. The lies had piled up until it reached a height surpassing Everest, it felt like I had no other choice but to fling myself off of it, or at least try to. And that leads us to the very courtroom I am sitting in eleven years later. Despite being eighteen years old and a freshman in college, I find myself constantly in circles. Stuck in a town very similar to the one I grew up in. Crushing on a guy who makes me feel like a kid again.

I remember when I first saw him. It felt like a movie. A really fucked up movie, but a movie nonetheless. I was in a mold-filled dorm building with nothing but shower shoes to protect me. It

was move-in day and all my aching body wanted to do was morph into mush. When I saw him walk in for the floor meeting, it was like a jolt of electricity shot up through the bottoms of my feet. In a way he was simple, but simplicity was something I had come to yearn for. I convinced myself that his blonde hair was nothing like I had ever seen before. In reality, he was just a dirty blonde. I was so distracted by trying to figure out what shades of blue his eyes were that I never saw how he was *really* looking at me.

Ocean blue? Maybe a Tiffany blue? God, I wish I could know what blues were his blues.

The thing about courtrooms is nobody prepares you for how cold it feels. Behind the two pieces of glass giving me the ability to see, my squinting eyes could read that the thermostat was at a low of 68. This was supposed to be the room of comfort. A “safe place” as they like to lawfully put it. Anything and everything could be on the line. In fact, this was probably the first time in years I could actually tell people my side and really be listened to. Still, I felt uneasy and alone. Teeth chattering from the chill of the AC, my nerves, or both. Probably both.

And like a schoolgirl with a crush, I began thinking of him. For once, there was a slim beam of light in my world of shadows; distracting me from the harshness of my reality. I think of him and I feel the warmth move through my body. Hope lives there. Hopes of finding “the one.” Hopes of not being alone. Hopes of breaking the circle. He was my hope and that was my second mistake. To be fair, I couldn’t help it. Maybe I could have, but I sure as hell wasn’t going to. I felt at ease with him. Like nothing else mattered except for him and I. My past and his past was not our future and that was all that mattered. History always finds a way to repeat itself.

The three D’s: Deflecting, Drinking, & Drugs. Shocking that system doesn’t work for too long before it bites you on the ass. I tried to forget the hurt he did to me, but it was already home to a wound I knew too well. I finally realized that I didn’t like him quoting movie lines, but I liked that

he knew all the movies I used to watch when I was little. I thought I liked him scolding me and telling me when I was wrong, but really I just liked someone caring enough to yell. I even convinced myself his snores were charming, but they just reminded me of my dad. All the qualities I thought I admired about him, was only because it made me feel like a kid again.

Like I still had a father.

Like I still lived in a bubble.

Bubbles pop.